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**Meeting Strategies to Help Prepare Students for**

**Group Work**

Working in groups is quite different than working individually. One of the main reasons why students find it difficult is that they were not trained to perform effectively in a team setting. An instructor can help by teaching organizational, personal, and discussion skills that will help students manage group dynamics and have a positive teamwork experience. Meetings are key events during group work, and there are several techniques for running effective meetings.

**Planning and Running a Meeting**

**Steps that should be taken before a meeting happens:**

 plan the meeting carefully: who, what, when, where, why, and how many

 prepare and send out an agenda, identifying issues to be discussed

 set up meeting room send out background information about members

**Steps that should be taken during a meeting**

 start on time

 make introductions of group members

 clearly define roles

 review, revise, and order the agenda

 set clear time limits

 review action items from previous meeting

 focus on one issue at a time

**Steps that should be taken at the end of and after a meeting**

 record final decisions or actions to be taken

 assign tasks to group members

 set deadlines for the tasks

 set the date and place of the next meeting and develop a preliminary agenda

 evaluate the meeting, get feedback from members

 close the meeting positively

 clean up the room

 prepare the group memo, distribute to members and others who need to know

**Group Roles**

**Different roles group members may play during a meeting:**

 facilitator/leader  timekeeper

 note taker  expert

 idea generator ("creative check-in")  mediator

 devil's advocate  presenter

 progress chaser

**Important tasks that should be performed by the facilitator of a meeting:**

 encouraging participation  summarizing input

 discouraging domination  encouraging decision making

 keeping group focused  making final decisions, if necessary

 clarifying ideas  delegating roles and tasks

 providing feedback  keeping the peace

 energizing group members



**Skills that students need to develop to promote effective group work:**

 active and tolerant listening  communication skills

 flexibility  accountability

 respect for others' contributions  helping others to master content

 participation  giving and receiving constructive feedback

 patience  managing disagreements

 motivation

 keeping deadlines

**Activities and tools that can be used in a group meeting for:**

**Opening discussion**

 list available resources

 state different perceptions of what the real problem

 brainstorm ideas - all ideas are encouraged and accepted

 legitimize - show an understanding of how others see the problem

 kickstart with an example

 propose some potential solutions

 ask each individual for a possible solution

**Narrowing down the solutions**

 evaluate solutions using some criteria

 make sure solutions address the issues

 rank ideas in order of priority

 categorize solutions

 separate solutions based on "pros/cons"

 look for redundant and overlapping ideas

 force field analysis (what ideas give support to solving the problem? which ones prevent reaching a solution?)

**Closing the discussion**

 majority voting

 consensus

 build up/eliminate (add or subtract from different options to arrive at a new option that everyone can support)

 combine ideas (avoid either/or decisions)